

Happy Birthday, Amber

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Summary: Amber's turning eighteen, and when it seems no one else in the world cares, he does.

1. Chapter 1

****Hey everyone! Just another little side-story I felt like writing. My birthday is on Wednesday cough cough Kelsey cough cough LOL and I just decided that Amber needed a birthday too. And we all know that with Amber, nothing is simple. This will be a two-parter! Enjoy!!****

* * *

>She heard the front door slam, and felt the rush of rage inside her, clawing its way up her neck until her face burned red with hate. She let the emotion burst through her lungs, and through her mouth, and shrieked so loud and for such a long time that she thought someone on the street might hear her, and rush into the house to see who was murdering her. There was, of course, no one else in the house with her, but that didn't matter. It felt like she'd been beaten with a baseball bat. Velma Von Tussle didn't know the definition of the word mild, and with everything she did, she took it to an extreme. It usually didn't bother Amber because, well, normally, it benefited her. Whether it was staging a contest or harassing someone until they gave her what she wanted, Amber had always seen the advantages of her mother's ruthlessness. Now that it was being used against her, she hated her for it.<p><p>

She felt the sudden stinging in her cheek again, and made her way to the bathroom mirror, purposely knocking various things down in the hallway as she strode to her destination. She knew it wouldn't help to break any of her mother's prized antiques, but right now, she didn't care. She was filled with so much revulsion that she wanted to see her mother suffer, whether it was now or later. She pushed in through the bathroom door and glared at her reflection in the mirror. The long, red streaks of betrayal ran down her face, in two vertical

lines that began just beneath her left eye and ended about an inch above her jawbone. She clenched her jaw, and studied the scratches. It had taken so little to receive them, and she was paying so dearly for it. Aside from the fact that it hurt worse than hell, her mother was infuriated over the simple marks, and the actions from which they had resulted.

She wet a washcloth and pressed gently against her cheek, knowing that by tomorrow that side of her face would be swollen. At least she didn't have school. Not that it meant much. Her mother would probably parade her around downtown just to humiliate her. She groaned gently as the pressure from the washcloth hit her wounds, and she flinched. She was filled with rage again suddenly at the thought of the girl who had done this to her. She wanted to punch the mirror, in retaliation, but knew that a broken hand had never helped anyone.

She felt tears of frustration burning in the crystal blue eyes that looked back at her from the mirror. She rolled her eyes toward the ceiling and let the tears reside before pulling the cloth away from her cheek. It looked, and felt, worse now than it had immediately after Shelley had raked her long, manicured nails down the side of her cheek. At that moment, Amber had been so passionately dedicated to hurting her that she hadn't felt the pain of her wound, or of her mother's hand entwined in her hair, pulling her from the stage floor and into the backstage area. Amber had still been in mid-swing, screaming and cursing at the other girl so fervently that she hadn't realized her mother had actually stepped onto the set itself, and entangled her bony, crooked fingers into the mess of hairspray and bobby pins at the base of her neck. It wasn't until after she had hurled her against one of the sturdy walls backstage that she realized she was no longer brawling with the redhead, and was, instead, screaming a mess of obscenities and slurs at her mother.

Even when Amber had realized she'd been dragged away from the catfight, she tried to push out of her mother's grasp and lunge at Shelley once again, who was now standing outside a confused cluster of her friends, nursing the swollen eye Amber had given her just moments before. The dancing had long stopped since Shelley's latest bad-tempered shove had sent Amber flying across the stage, and, in turn, back at her throat. And though the consequences had been damaging, Amber wouldn't take it back, if not for anything else but the look that crossed the other girl's face when she sent a fist smashing against one of the redhead's eyes. It had sent her stumbling back, but she'd recovered quickly and leaped towards Amber, her pointer and middle finger digging into the soft flesh of her cheek and dragging them down, while her other hand twisted the blonde's hair to keep her still. Amber had tried to fight her off then, but Shelley was stronger, and she would have done more if Velma hadn't dove between them at that moment. Corny, and the rest of the council kids, had seen the whole thing, and she knew what they were thinking. They were probably cheering Shelley on, encouraging her for finally clawing the hell out of Amber Von Tussle. She didn't need their help, anyway. Corny was enamored with his precious "smooth as silk" Shelley, and he hadn't needed to say anything to either of them to make it obvious who he had sided with during the fight.

Even now, glaring at her hardened face in the mirror, she hadn't let herself cry over the pain, or what had happened. She couldn't let

herself become a victim. That, even to Amber, was unacceptable. Instead, she grew angrier and angrier with each passing moment. On the car ride home from the studio, her mother had berated her until the veins in her neck were prominent and her eyes were bulging out of their sockets.

"How dare you," she had scolded her, "embarrass me like that, in front of everyone at the studio; in front of everyone watching that channel?" Of course, scolded wasn't the word Amber would use to describe the way her mother had spoken to her. She'd seen her treat the vermin on the streets better than the way she'd regarded her at the moment, and Amber hadn't even tried to explain herself. She knew that to Velma, there was no understanding why she had suddenly had enough of Shelley's stupid, smug attitude. Velma could never understand taking your anger out on a person at that moment; every fight she'd ever gotten into had taken months of planning, perpetration and back-stabbing. Amber didn't care about that; she'd just wanted to hurt the bitch.

Of course, with Velma Von Tussle, there was no such thing as a regular punishment. There was no "grounded for a week", or having her telephone or television privileges revoked. Anyway, with the strict dancing and dieting schedule her mother always enforced on her, there wasn't much time for either of those things in the first place. She couldn't remember the last time she'd talked to one of her girlfriends on the phone; they'd call, of course, but Amber was always in her room, and heard her mother strictly tell them not to bother calling back. Amber didn't have time to talk with the weight of her mother's world resting upon her shoulders.

That was why, this time, Amber had committed a cardinal sin. She hadn't failed an important test, or lied about where she'd been to sneak off with her friends; she had humiliated Velma, and that was something that no one could get away with, not even Amber. That was, in Velma's eyes, unforgivable. It meant that she was liable to punish Amber not for fighting, but for attempting to ruin everything she had built for them, and she intended to do just that. The defining moment of her mother's control over her life had come when Velma had told Amber that today, the day of her eighteenth birthday, was forgotten. She had taken her directly home from the studio, cancelled the dinner reservations they'd had that night, and informed her that she was to spend the remainder of her birthday in the house with no contact from the outside world. To further her point, Velma had arranged to go out that evening, which didn't break Amber's heart. If it was between being alone and being with her mother, she'd gladly spend her birthday by herself.

She sighed, dropping the wet cloth into the sink and making her way through the hall and back to her bedroom. As she collapsed onto her bed, she tried not to think about what she could be doing instead of wallowing in self pity and rehashing the fight that had left claw marks on her pretty face. Her stomach growled suddenly, and she felt foolish for wishing she was at that restaurant her mother had finally promised to take her to. She was sure that this wasn't just a temporary punishment; her mother would hold this over her head for years. That thought alone was enough to start searching the newspapers for apartments.

She let herself fall back against her pillows, and pulled one over her head, letting herself scream into it, releasing all of the air in

her lungs. The satin of the pillow case brushed her scratches, and she cried out again, this time from pain, and fresh tears burned her eyes. She didn't bother to wipe them away this time, and let them slip down her face. They left small trails of moisture on her nose, and she sniffed, wiping her face angrily with one hand, careful to avoid the enflamed area on her cheek.

She heard the doorbell, and thought, for a moment, to let whoever it was leave. She wasn't expecting anyone, and unless it was Shelley coming to finish the fight, she knew no one cared that she was here alone, her birthday or not. Pushing herself from the bed, she walked to the front door and pulled it open, glaring sourly at the man on the other side.

Before looking at his face, she realized he was holding a small, covered pan and a small bouquet of yellow roses in his hand. She felt her stomach knot as her eyes fell upon his face.

She caught herself as she sniffed again, and looked up at him, knowing how horrible she must have looked at the moment. Her hair was mussed, her make-up was smeared, and she could literally feel the throbbing in her cheek. And yet, he smiled at her.

"Happy Birthday, Amber. May I come in?"

2. Chapter 2

This didn't turn out exactly like I had wanted it to, but oh well. Anyway, tomorrow's my birthday and I wanted to have it posted before then! Enjoy! I'll probably post a new chapter of "A Smile Like Yours" within the next day or two, so check back!

* * *

>"Corny," she said his name, and coughed softly. "What are you doing here?" <p>He smiled easily at her.<p>

"May I come in?" He asked again, and she stepped aside for him to enter, her eyes watching as he stepped into the house. She studied the flowers in his hand, and he held them out to her casually. "Here, these are for you. Happy Birthday."

She took the bouquet into her hand and studied the flowers intensely before looking back up at him.

"What are you doing here?" She asked the question again.

"I just wanted to make sure you were okay. I heard some of the things your mother was saying to you on the way out of the studio. I thought maybe you were tied up and gagged." She studied him with cold eyes, and then turned to walk down the hallway, letting the flowers fall onto a small end table. He followed her into the living room and sighed loudly. "They're going to die if you don't put them in water."

She glanced toward the flowers, and mumbled something under his breath.

"What was that?" He was still standing, holding the small covered

pan, and she looked up at him.

"I said that as soon as my mother sees them they're going to die, anyway. She kills everything she comes in contact with." Including her spirit. She frowned at the flowers for another moment, and then disappeared. When she returned, she had a small vase full of water, and slipped the flowers into it. Even if her mother did throw them out as soon as she saw them, there was no point in just letting them die. She studied them after she placed them on a side table. "Thank you."

She let herself fall onto the couch, and he placed the small pan on his lap as he sat neatly beside her.

"You know, Amber, no one should have to be alone on their birthday." Not even the ice princess herself.

"That's not the way my mother sees it," she let herself answer him, and knew that if, for some reason, her mother were to come home right now, they would both be in more trouble than she could stand to think about right now.

"Yeah, well—" She knew that he was trying to think of something to say to her in return, without admitting any of the detestation he felt for Velma. She wished he would say something awful about her right now; it would open up the flood gate for all of the vicious things she herself wanted to say. "Your mother operates by her own convictions."

They sat in silence for a moment, and she turned her face away from him, inadvertently turning her head just enough so that the cuts scaling the length of her jaw were visible to him. He _tsk_ed softly, and she glared back at him.

"Wow. Shelley really cut you up, huh?" There was a hint of amusement in his voice, and it made her angry again suddenly. Her eyes flashed with rage.

"I'm really not in the mood to hear it from you, Corny. If you have nothing better to do than make a mockery of me, you can just leave." Her wounds were throbbing now, perhaps from the simple reminder that they were there, and they were ugly.

"I'm sorry," his voice came quietly a moment later, "but, Amber, you really should have gone to a doctor. They look like they might get infected."

"It's fine," her voice was cold, and she crossed her arms over her chest. "I don't need a doctor. I've learned to heal by myself." She spoke the words, knowing that there were two connotations for them, and hoped that he hadn't picked up on that fact. She heard him move on the other side of the couch, and he picked up the small container he had brought with him, sitting it on his lap.

"I just—" he let himself hesitate as she watched his fingers pull back the aluminum foil. "I had a hunch you might be here alone, so I made you something." He held the small round cake out to her, and she studied its imperfections, with white icing dripping down the sides and the way it caved in slightly in the middle. She wanted to laugh at its ridiculous appearance, but the pain in her heart stopped her.

He sat it on the couch between them, and licked a dollop of icing from his finger as she studied the desert.

"I can't eat that," she found herself saying the words, though it wasn't what she wanted to say. Even now, when her mother had abandoned her on the biggest day of her life, her voice was in the back of Amber's mind, chiding her for even being tempted to taste such a fattening treat. "My mother would make me exercise for a year just to work off one piece."

She pretended not to notice the disappointment in his eyes, but he was back quickly, his lips curving into a smug smile.

"Just one little bite," he urged her, and she could practically feel her taste buds begging her to give into him. She let her tongue dart out to lick her lips, and felt a smile pressing onto her face, even though she had tried her best to disguise it as a simple look of indecisiveness. She heard her stomach growl, and he did too, because he looked at her.

"You're hungry, Amber." He said it like she couldn't tell. She nodded in spite of herself.

"My mother was supposed to take me to this amazing French restaurant she's been talking about for years." She could feel her mouth watering just thinking about the amazing menu her mother had described to her. "Of course, you know how that went." She saw his eyes drop from the corner of her eye, and he smiled softly at her.

"Just take a bite. One little bite." He was pleading with her now, and she was enjoying it.

"Okay," she nodded along with her words, and started to reach her finger out, just to taste some of the creamy icing that had been spread onto the lopsided cake. He pulled it away quickly before she was able to touch it.

"Wait," he disappeared for a moment, and she sat dumbly, listening as she heard him rustling around in the kitchen. He joined her again a moment later, holding the cake carefully in his hands as he made his way over to her, the fire of eighteen candles flickering over his face as he sat it down on the coffee table in front of her. "If we're going to do this, we have to do it right." He raised an eyebrow at her. "Now, Miss Von Tussle, let me treat you."

She wanted to wrap her arms around him and kiss him, thank him for making her feel so special when everyone in the world had forgotten about her. Of course, she didn't. She couldn't find it in herself to do anything but smile sweetly at him.

He used a fork to cut off a small piece from the side, and promptly raised the utensil to her pink lips. She watched him carefully, and when the fork was close enough, she opened her mouth and he slid it in. The sweetness filled her mouth instantly, and she tried to remember the last time she'd had a piece of cake that tasted half as good. She let out a quiet moan of pleasure, and closed her eyes as she let herself savor the moment. When she looked at him again, he was smiling at her.

"Thank you," she said, and she meant it. He nodded, but didn't say a word. She let her fingers slip down to the cake, and swirled her finger over the creamy icing on top before bringing her finger to her mouth and letting her tongue lick it clean. She sighed again, and looked at him. "Really, thanks. I mean it."

"I know you do," he smiled softly at her, and then dug the fork into the cake again, this time lifting it to his own mouth and licking it clean.

"You make a mean cake," she smiled as she watched him, and he nodded in satisfaction.

They ate in silence for a few moments, and passed the fork back and forth between them, each taking their turn in licking the icing away. He mumbled something, and she turned to look at him. His eyes fell upon her abrasions, and she let her hand touch her cheek softly, forgetting that they marred her otherwise perfect skin. She flinched at the pain it caused to surge through her, and he didn't pretend not to notice. He stood up, and withdrew into the bathroom for a moment, returning with a small tube of cream and a damp cloth.

"I know you're going to protest," He spoke the words as he came toward her, and began to twist the cap off the tube, "but I don't care. You're going to get an infection if you don't clean your wounds." He held his hand against the top of her blonde head and used his other hand to dab her cheek with the soft rag. She groaned in objection and tried to pull away from him, but he was stronger than her, and she couldn't move from his grasp. She started to curse at him before she realized that he wasn't hurting her. As much pain as her injuries had caused her when she herself handled them, his touch was comforting. It was almost healing. She let herself lean into his touch, pressing her cheek slightly against the cloth, just as he pulled it away from her face. He squeezed some white cream onto his finger and brought it to her cheek, spreading it gently over her wounds. His gentle caress made her sigh inwardly, and a soft breath escaped through her sticky lips. He smiled gently at her as he finished smoothing the ointment on her face.

"There, that's better." He wiped his hands on the cloth, and folded it before laying it on the coffee table.

"Yeah, much," she sighed, trying to fight the tingling sensation in her belly that had begun when his fingers had brushed her soft skin. She suddenly wanted him to touch her again; to use his fingertips to stroke even more sensitive parts of her body. His fingers stroked her cheek again, dancing dangerously close to the curve of her lips. She suddenly wanted to kiss his fingers, to take them into her mouth and-

He stood up suddenly.

"You know, that cake wasn't as filling as I thought. In fact, I'm starving." He stood staring at her, and she watched him blankly. "Let's go get something to eat."

She blinked at him.

"Corny, I can't, my mother-"

He laughed at her, and she furrowed her brows at him.

"You're telling me you've never lied to your mother before?" He dug his hands into his suit pockets, "I happen to know that is a lie."

She already knew that she was going to say yes before she spoke, but she wanted to make him wait for her answer.

"I don't know," she grinned coyly up at him, "I'm a picky eater. I have expensive taste."

He smiled back at her, reaching for her hand. She reached up, and he took her fingers into his slowly, bringing her knuckles to his mouth to place a soft kiss on them.

"I know this amazing French restaurant you'll just love."

She had completely forgotten about the scratches running down her face, or the fact that her mother had broken her heart. Suddenly, all that mattered was that this was the first day of her eighteenth year, and Corny Collins had just asked her on a date.

End
file.